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# THE HOUSE

HOME DECORATION AND FURNITURE.

IX.

THE desire to be original is very apt to tempt us to throw aside all precedent and tradition. This is a concession to the prevailing craving for something unusual or odd, a sort of vitiated taste that admires a design merely because it is different from the ordinary thing one sees. Modern sentiment admires a piece of furniture of unusual proportions, a decorative motive that runs counter to received laws, a room whose divisions and color are startling, entirely apart from the fact of real beauty or ugliness.

Such admiration is of course ephemeral, and will be transferred to-morrow to the next new thing. The reaction in favor of antiques, while, perhaps, savoring too much of a fashion, is still indicative of an improvement in public taste, and the return to any historical style, however inappropriate to our time, is better than the feverish search for oddities and novelties. The designer works on a higher plane, and study and thought are not thrown away—in fact, are absolutely necessary, when before “chic” or “snap” was all that was demanded. To be original within the limitation of a certain fixed style is extremely difficult, and appears often impossible. How can we design Moorish ornament better than the builders of the Alhambra? And when we have followed their marvellous work, what is left to be done? What is left to be done if one would carve Renaissance scrolls and panels, or fashion the tracery of a Gothic window? The case is not so hopeless, however, if we remember that a regard for the customs and necessities of our age makes certain changes obligatory, and a modernized adoption of a style is all we can consistently use. This gives the designer scope, and I must insist that it is better and immeasurably more difficult to do a good thing in a given style—a piece of work that shall fill all æsthetic and practical requirements—than one whose only claim to admiration is its originality.

It has been claimed that decorative art of the decorative sort—the Renaissance scroll, the Moorish fret—Japanese and Indian surface ornament, are not for us to do

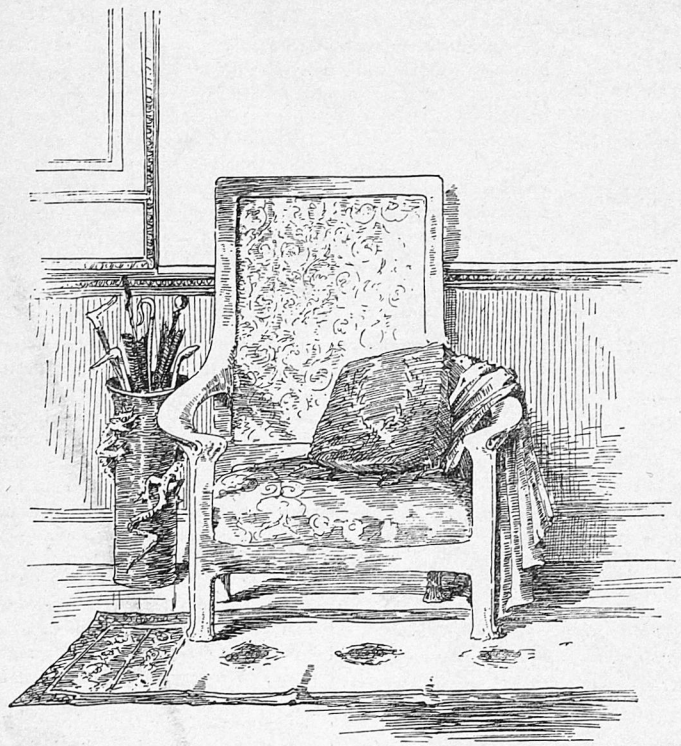
now; that the art is lost, and our only hope is in imitative art—painting flowers, landscapes and the like. It is undoubtedly true that the Eastern nations evince in their art work a feeling for form and color in conventional design that we cannot equal in any degree; and the mediæval workman, who was at once designer and carver, produced things we cannot approach. I am still optimist enough to hope for better things from our designers. If our carpet weavers cannot make rugs like those from Persia and Turkey, need they go back to their old-time devices of landscapes, peacocks and gigantic flowers? We surely do not want these in our carpets any more than we want our wall papers printed with representations of deer-hunts or oak panelling. If the average Chinese decorator of fans and vases can surpass the average American painter of plaques, that is no reason why plaques and vases should not be decorated, and decorated in the way we think proper. I am inclined to think that the method I have already described of combining or introducing naturalistic forms in conventional designs may make a characteristic style. The frieze given on pages 84 and 85, composed of iris, is an example. Suppose it is used for embroidery, or painted on plaster all around a room, or on gilded canvas, or on natural wood that shows the grain, or in some other similar way. Then the ordinary pictorial treatment of the iris would be inappropriate, and a conventionalized arrangement like this eminently suitable. An

easel picture, or single panel treated like a picture, is another thing; but this, it must be always remembered, is decorative art. The main characteristics of the flower and leaves may be shown—the general color and form; but just as

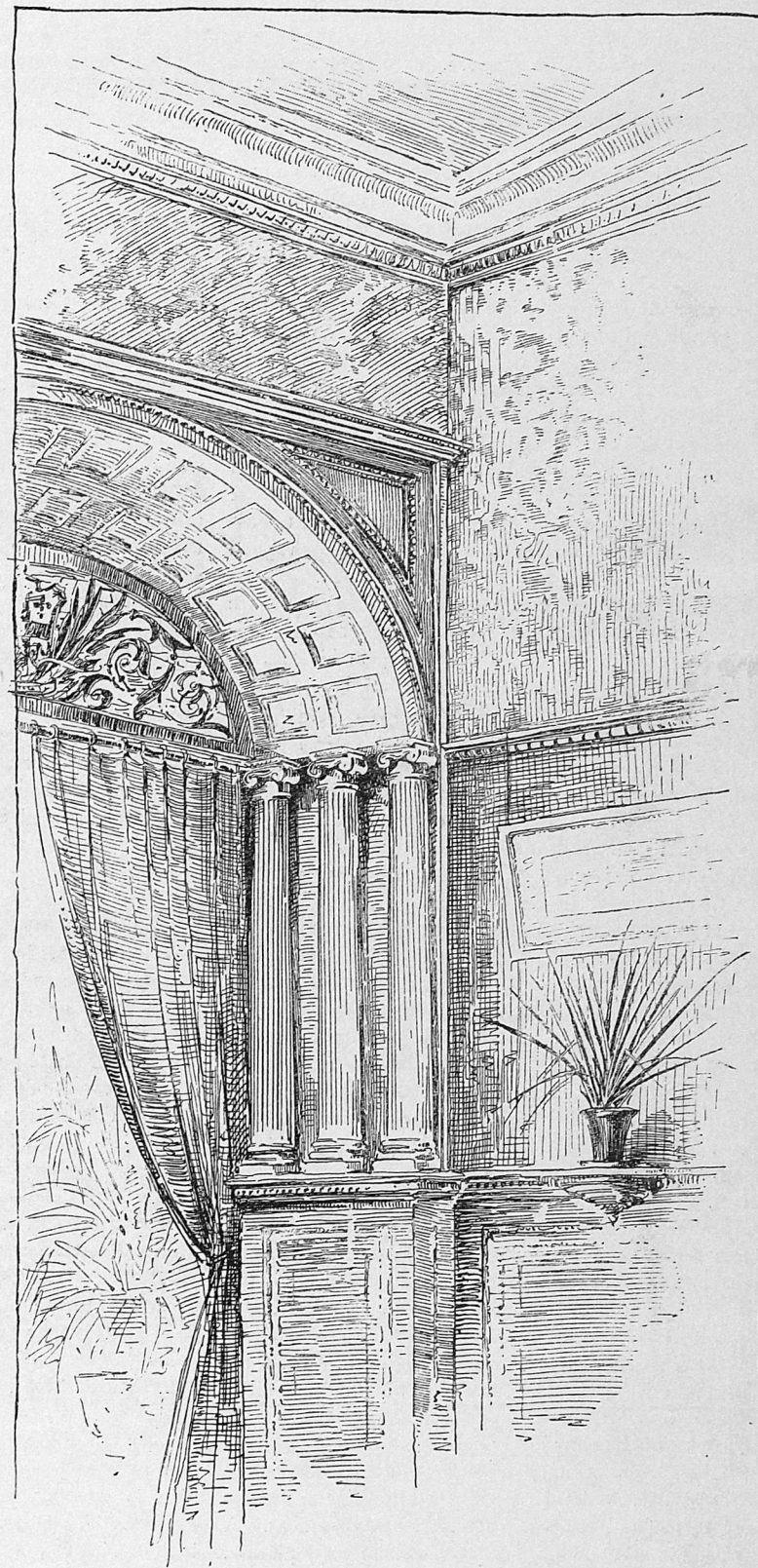
when we carve a flower in wood or stone, many of the qualities—important ones, too—cannot be expressed on account of the limitations of the material. The same is true of stained glass and mosaic. The temptation is to reproduce nature as faithfully as possible, and to make a picture. But when we consider the materials in which we are working and trying to represent the delicacy of a flower, the grace of a leaf, it seems better

to acknowledge the inevitable limitations. Certainly a better result is assured.

In the large illustration of the library, the painted frieze, if it were an attempt at an exact representation of natural objects, animals, flowers, still-life or what not,



LARGE OAKEN CHAIR FOR THE HALL.



ARCH AND COLUMNS OF MAHOGANY.

it would challenge criticism as a picture, and besides would be, for a picture, poorly placed, and at best only part of it would be well lighted. As the position is fixed the treatment should be considered accordingly and a decorative composition employed. It is then judged from an entirely different stand-point, and will probably give more pleasure under the circumstances than a pictorial treatment, even if this were the work of a master.

The large panel over the fireplace is an instance where pictorial art may be displayed to advantage. A



good picture is here well placed, well framed and within the range of vision; at any rate, it is not "skyed."

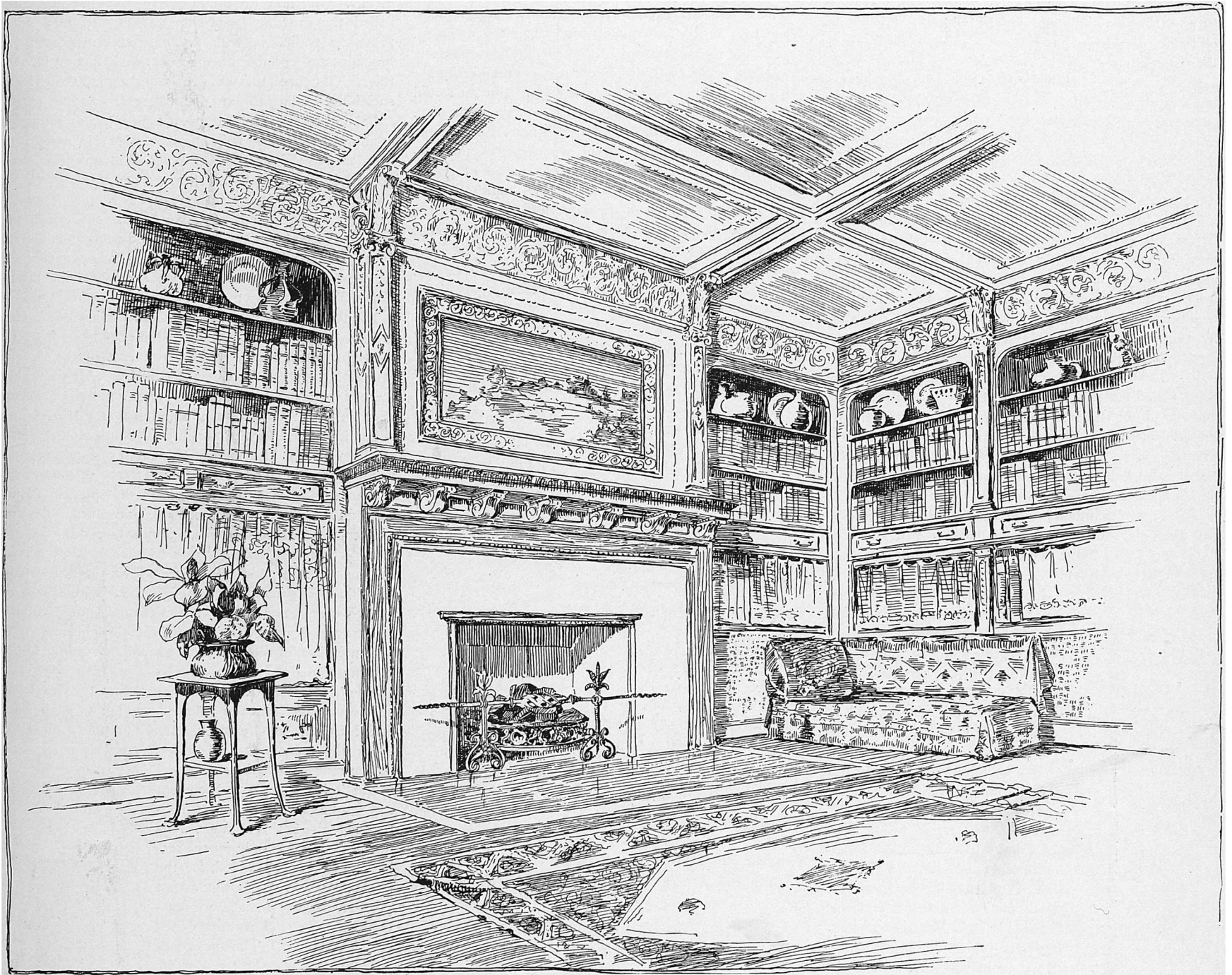
This sketch is an illustration of a strictly architectural treatment of a large room that need not result in too much formality. The general lines and main divisions are studied so that the fireplace, book-cases and ceiling beams are studied together, but the smaller subdivisions are varied without disturbing the general symmetry, such as the shelves and cupboards on either side of the fireplace. The scheme of leaving the upper shelf for bric-à-brac is at once practical and decorative. It is too high for books and gives a dark line of shadow all around the room, with fine opportunities for color in the vases, plaques and similar objects that will find a resting-place there. The couch in the corner is shown covered with rugs, no wood-work showing. This I have found an excellent arrangement, making a most luxu-

green. The chair stood guard on a brown and dark red hall-way with a bronze umbrella-stand and a Turkish rug, all bathed in a rich yellow light from a stained glass window on the staircase landing. The question of how to treat the hall in a city house is not easily answered. If we have space enough, chairs such as these, and oaken chests or tables serve as hat-racks better than the brass-armed straggling pieces of furniture sold for this purpose in the shops. It is much pleasanter even in a narrow hall, when we are cramped for room, to find the conventional hat-rack replaced by something more stable and agreeable in form. But we run the danger of over-crowding, which we must avoid. One seldom sees a room after it is furnished looking too bare, but how often do we find apartments so crowded that one needs a pilot to steer successfully through the maze of small tables, bric-à-brac stands, chairs and sofas,

so. But the result is not all that could be wished; for while a room filled to distraction with furniture, rugs, lamps, bric-à-brac, pictures and all the rest of it may be an attractive place to visit, it cannot and in fact it is not a comfortable room to live in. I have seen many dainty conceits, many clever contrivances for saving space in the rooms and many charming effects simply obtained, and I have every respect for the ingenuity and taste that guided the owners, but the effect of overcrowding is unpleasant, nevertheless.

ARCHITECT.

IN making alterations in an old mansion on Manhattan Island, the problem occurred of utilizing the space over a mantel which had been set across one corner of a room, leaving a triangular recess where formerly was a corner cupboard. In its place was put a small bookcase of plain pine ornamented with large Japanese nails of



ARCHITECTURAL BUT NOT TOO FORMAL TREATMENT OF A LIBRARY.

rious and beautiful piece of furniture. It need not be expensive; the frame, being hidden, can be of common pine, and the cushion or mattress is not costly; the only expense is the rug, or rugs, which may be obtained at all prices.

Extravagance in rugs I find one seldom regrets, as they do not go out of fashion, nor do they seem to wear out, and the color gets richer year by year. I have known a rug to do duty on a couch like the one just referred to, then to be used to cover a piece of wall back of a sofa, and finally to find its place on the floor among others of its kind.

The huge oaken hall chair here shown is of the generous proportions demanded by comfort and ease. This was made of oak stained dark—rather a warm brown tone—and the cushions were covered with heavy tapestry of which the prevailing tone was bluish

which are all set across corners and pushed out from the wall. I read a most enthusiastic description the other day of what was termed an ideal room—a bachelor's apartment. This, it was stated, was the size of an ordinary "hall bedroom," which we know is not palatial. This surprising room was divided into three parts by two bamboo portières, and had a sideboard chiffoniere, table, wash-stand, beside the inevitable folding-bed. There was a large chandelier and three lamps, plush curtains, shelves, easy-chairs and many other things that all possess the property of occupying space. I speak of the misguided admiration for this over-crowded, over-lighted little room, for I have seen many like it in kind, although none quite so overdone. There is perhaps an excuse for the proprietor of one of these "bachelor apartments" for accumulating too many things in his little room; indeed, it is difficult for him not to do

hammered iron representing pine boughs and canes and rusted to imitate the natural color. A curtain of old brocade, in a small pattern of pale pink and yellowish green, hung ready to be drawn across, and the space at the back was filled with peacock feathers.

THE large pointed window over the entrance of the Church of the Heavenly Rest, on Fifth Avenue, has just been filled with stained glass in memory of the founder and first rector of the church, the late Rev. Dr. Howland. The five lancet lights of the lower part of the window show seated figures of Christ and the four evangelists; the traceried upper part has ornamental designs into which are wrought the symbols of the evangelists. The problem of filling a window like this with modern stained glass is a difficult one, and we are bound to say that it has not been successfully solved in this case.



## THE BEDROOM AT BEDTIME.

IN a recent English novel, a Parisian lady of the noble faubourg is made to give an account of her bedroom and her precautions against the cold. Not only are pillows and counterpane stuffed with eider-down and doors and windows and the bed itself trebly curtained, but the walls, it appears, are covered with wadded silk, and a swan-skin rug is spread for the luxurious little animal to step upon. And her story is interrupted with many a significant "B-r-r-r" and shiverings meant to show that the mere thought of a breath of air was torture.

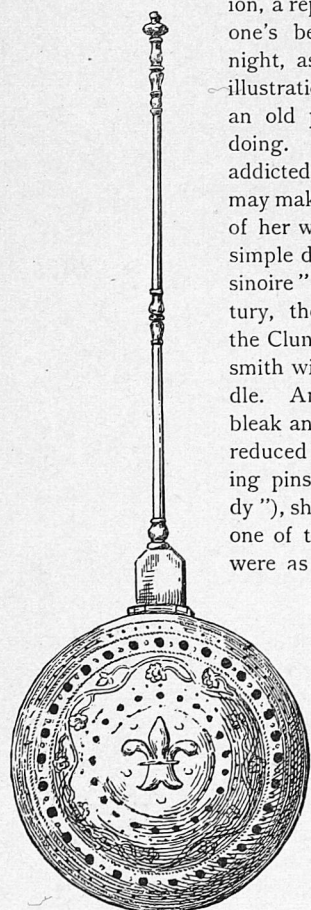
While despising this extreme, perhaps many of our own more robust young women lean too much to the opposite. Some of their rooms are like nothing so much as an anchorite's cell. Bare white walls, no hangings, scarce a scrap of carpet, are the sort of surroundings to which they have accustomed themselves. But this simplicity may lead to a certain coarseness, and is almost sure to bring on colds and coughs, which, as a celebrated Scotch physician has said, "cause more deaths than the plague."

In this, as in so many other things of the kind, the last century customs were more rational than either extreme of those of the present. The indefensible alcoves apart, none could well be prettier or wholesomer than the eighteenth century bedrooms such as we see them in the numerous prints of the time.

Let us reconstitute a bedroom of the period, adapting it to the present, and, to begin, let us summarize Count Xavier de Maistre's description of his own in his memorable "Voyage." "My room faces both the rising and the setting sun," he says; "it forms a long rectangle, which is thirty-six paces round, keeping very close to the wall." The bed, placed at the end of the chamber, formed the most agreeable perspective. The first rays of the sun came through the foliage of the elm trees without, to fall on his curtains of white and rose. Near it was his fauteuil, an excellent piece of furniture—"above all, of the last utility for one of a meditative habit." Near the fauteuil was his table and also the fireplace, where he burned his fingers in toasting his bread; and four steps from his bureau was the portrait of Madame Hautcastel, which led him into so many reveries. For a military man this, it will be said, was sufficiently comfortable, and, indeed, a lady of those days would need but a screen and a sofa and a chiffoniere or so in addition.

It is far from being, in our opinion, a reprehensible luxury to have one's bed warmed on a winter night, as the chambermaid in the illustration given herewith (after an old print by Freudenberg) is doing. If our reader should be addicted to hammering brass, she may make herself the greater part of her warming-pan, copying the simple design we give of a "basinoire" of the seventeenth century, the original of which is in the Cluny Museum. Any copper-smith will make and affix the handle. And, having in mind the bleak and December nights that reduced Widow Wadman to corking pins (vide "Tristram Shandy"), she may provide herself with one of these foot-warmers, which were as dear as the warming-pan to her grandmother.

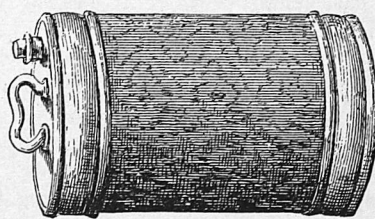
With this degree of comfort a certain elegance, which has nothing of ostentation or of the conventional, naturally connects itself. These eighteenth-century bedroom modes are essentially feminine, and as different from our modern fashions as a dressing-gown is from a tailor-made suit. A room furnished in accordance with



BRASS WARMING-PAN, 17TH CENTURY.

them has that charm which belongs to everything that clearly expresses its true nature. And when the lamp is out, and lines of light from the fire run along

the polished mouldings or bring out some gilded beading or mounting of wrought bronze, and when, bringing fancy and memory both to the work, one retraces the obscured outlines of each familiar article, one will certainly feel little disposed to change it against either the



FOOT-WARMER.

luxury of the modern Parisienne or the affected simplicity of some of her English sisters.

There was one Frenchwoman that we can remember—and she is in fiction, and only half a Frenchwoman, a creation of Alexandre Dumas, Jr.—who absolutely loved cold. She delighted in clean linen, principally because of its, to her, agreeable chilliness. But we would not only have the bed linen warmed, but the room also, every evening. We agree with "Bachelor Bluff," who, in his picture of an ideal home, discourses of the bedroom fire: "A half hour at night before a fire of crackling logs, while the pillow waits for its expected occupant," he says, "is one of the most restful and agreeable experiences of the day. One plans a hundred hopeful and recalls innumerable pleasant things in that brief overture to the reign of Somnus. The hush of the hour, the seclusion, the sense of ease and peace that prevails—all seem to unbend the mind and to summon hope and fancy for its delectation. To hurry to one's room, swiftly disrobe in the chilling air, and plunge between the sheets in unseemly haste, is the act of a barbarian; to linger over warm embers, musing and dream-



FRENCH CHAMBERMAID (18TH CENTURY) WARMING A BED. AFTER A PRINT BY FREUDENBERG.

ing, speculating upon the problems of life, recalling pleasant incidents of the misty bygone, is the luxurious but harmless indulgence of a poet."

"No amount of delicacy," William Morris remarks, "is too great in drawing the curves of a pattern, no amount of care in getting the leading lines right from the first can be thrown away, for beauty of detail cannot afterward cure any shortcoming in this. Remember that a pattern is either right or wrong. It cannot be forgiven for blundering, as a picture may be which has otherwise great qualities in it. It is with a pattern as with a fortress, it is no stronger than its weakest point. A failure forever recurring torments the eye too much to allow the mind to take any pleasure in suggestion and intention."

THE amateur of hammered work in brass or copper, who may wish to show his skill in a small and delicate form, can hardly find a better model than the little water-sprinkler which we illustrate. The original is in the Cluny Museum, and is in gilt copper. It is to be carried in the hand about the room, allowing the water to come drop by drop from the nozzle.

## SCREENS.

## I.

THE restoration of the screen as a decorative as well as useful object in the drawing-room has been one of the most pleasing incidents in the movement in this country in favor of the artistic furnishing of the home. Apart from its primary use in protecting one from draughts, its value for breaking up the monotony of a long room can hardly be overestimated. It has various special uses, too, which help to make it popular. As an aid to a cosy tête-à-tête it is invaluable. The writer knows of a young lady—one of several sisters, and only recently admitted to the privileges of the drawing-room—who, finding herself at a disadvantage, made her own place by the aid of a screen, a couple of conversation chairs—united like the Siamese twins—a low table and a lamp. The result was so fortunate that her sisters followed her example with more screens and luxurious divans. In time the long New York parallelogram called the drawing-room was transformed into small provinces walled in with Japanese embroideries, royal brocades and cunning needle-work, each having its own ruler. Of course, this was over-doing a good thing, mere sociability leading to pure clannishness.

Painted screens are rarely so handsome as embroidered ones, unless the painting is carried far enough to simulate the elaborate Boucher and Watteau designs, so popular in the eighteenth century, when screens held an important place in the fitting up of a room. Tapestry painting opens up an attractive field in this direction; and in a special chapter to be devoted to practical hints for those who wish to design and paint their own screens, on canvas or similar material, we shall give due attention to this charming mode of decoration.

Painted leather screens are best for a dining-room. One is always appropriate in front of the door leading to the butler's pantry, marking the movements of the servant in carrying plates and dishes to and fro. An admirable painted leather screen suitable for such a purpose has long been in the show window at Yandell's, in Fifth Avenue—a gold ground for the panels with landscapes painted on them by Mr. Murphy or some artist of equal reputation. Such a screen probably costs \$1000 or more, and, of course, is not for the reader of modest purse. Painted and embossed leather panels of conventional designs are very much less expensive, and may be equally decorative. The coarse textile known as burlaps is often used for the same purpose, being covered with gold leaf, and on this rich ground decorated with a bold design of grapes, oranges or apples, or of a plum or pumpkin vine in flower. Any of the various metallic bronzes may take the place of the gold for a ground, according to the scheme of color of the room.

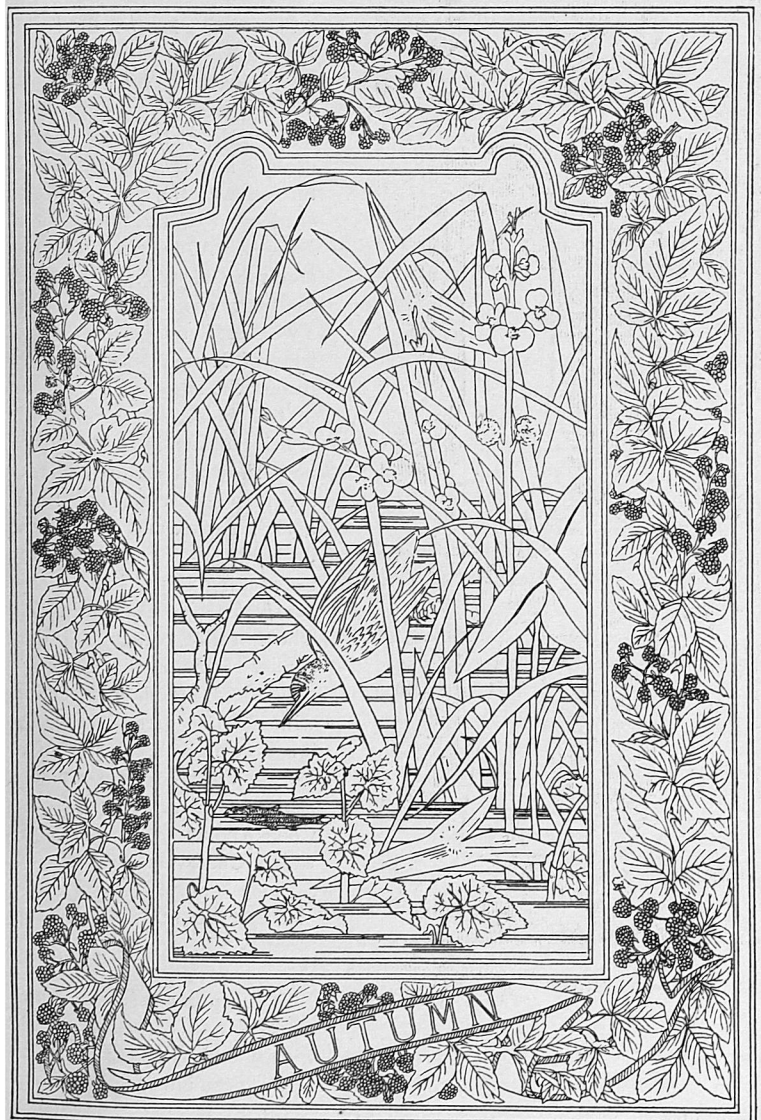
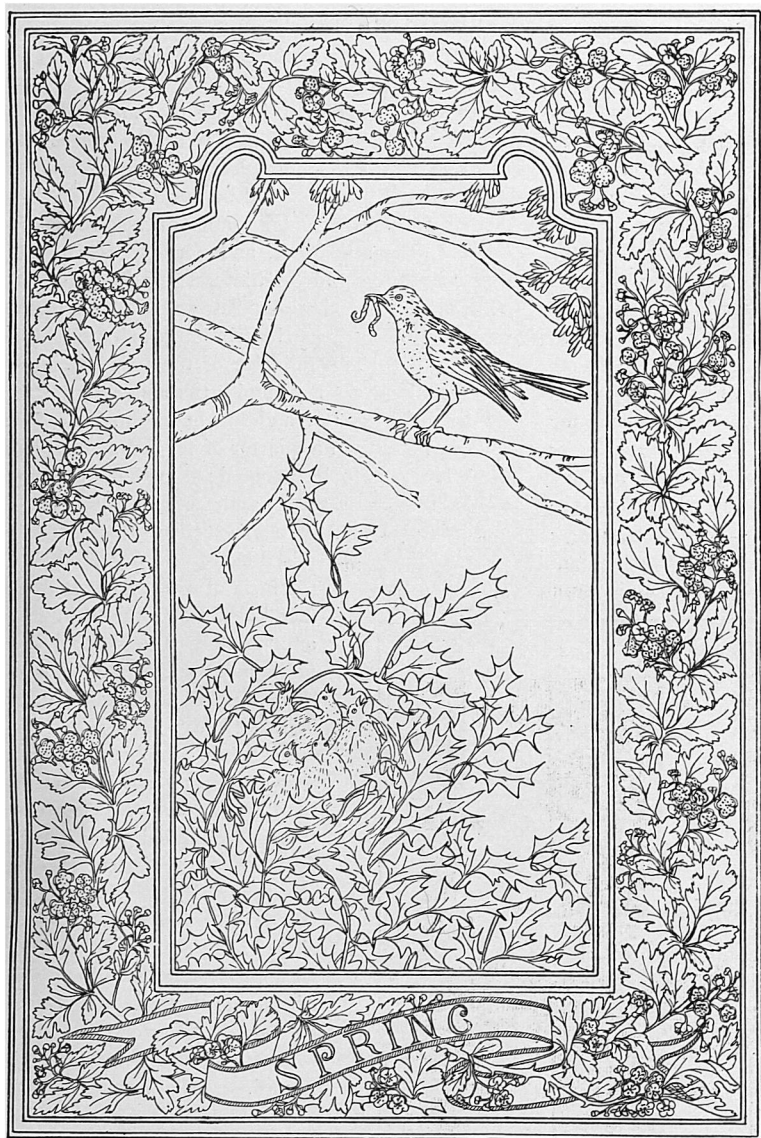
One of the most decorative screens that the writer has seen was made from the palette scrapings of Miss Kate and Miss Lizzie Greatorex. It is not a bad plan for those who paint to keep a burlap screen mounted in the studio and utilize it in this way. Excellent suggestions in color often incidentally arise in this manner. This idea, of course, is only for the artist, and, it may be added, for the studio. Screens of this sort do not properly belong in show apartments; there, such summary cannot be tolerated. The surface of the fabric to be decorated must be fine and the execution of the design must be in keeping with it.

In embroidered screens, South Kensington has sent out many handsome all-over designs. The William Morris designs in wall-paper, which are more accessible, give a very good idea of the treatment. The designs are usually executed on fine lustrous saten or satin sheeting and in monotone. Fine warm gray linen is also a desirable fabric. The design is usually in outline stitch. The panel designs by Ellen Welby of classic female figures which have been given in The Art Amateur are especially suitable for screens of this kind. Something similar has been seen recently at the rooms of the Decorative Art Society—carefully outlined figures of Venus, Juno and Ceres, with the em-



REPOUSSÉ METAL PERFUME SPRINKLER, 17TH CENTURY.





"THE SEASONS." PANELS FOR A FOURFOLD SCREEN. FOR PAINTING OR EMBROIDERY.

EACH DESIGN WILL ALSO BE PUBLISHED FULL WORKING SIZE (18 x 27). "SPRING" WAS SO GIVEN IN THE ART AMATEUR FOR FEBRUARY.



blematic dove, peacock and harvest sheaves, the head of each unrelieved in a circle and the space outside filled in with foliage. The Seasons similarly treated make a four-leaved screen.

Needlewomen with the necessary technical skill and patience find motives rich in color in glowing bunches of chrysanthemums, in stalks of fleur-de-lis, purple and yellow, and in masses of red and yellow roses, which are embroidered in solid silk embroidery on silk, the chrysanthemum, for example, on dark or light red or yellow, the fleur-de-lis on light blue, or if the yellow are preferred, on deep yellow, and the roses on light red silk. This is work that demands a high degree of skill not only with the needle, but in the management of color. Screens of this sort are mounted in ebony or mahogany. Little shelves and miniature balconies are often appendages to the mounting; but they are useless, as anything set on them would be in imminent peril.

Rich silken stuffs, and more particularly brocades, are handsome enough in themselves for screens. There is an especial demand now for the purpose of such gay French brocades as are associated with the furniture coverings of drawing-rooms of the period of the three Louis. Screens of this description are mounted in white enamelled frames touched with gold. In many of them small mirrors are inserted. They are edged simply with furniture gimp, and below the mirrors hang a network of silken tassels.

Single-leaved fire screens of creamy white or light-tinted brocaded silk, finely embroidered or outlined with couchings of gold thread, and usually mounted in brass frames, are much used in rooms of the period of the three Louis. A single sheet of plate-glass, simply framed, makes an attractive screen, particularly when it shows the picture of the glowing coals behind it. Richly decorative effects with a mosaic of stained or jewelled glass are to be had on the same principle of using the firelight.

#### ALTAR FRONTAL CENTRAL DECORATION.

THE design for central decoration of an altar frontal given in the supplement is intended for working in embroidery, either silks or crewels, or partly appliqué work. Since the symbolical features are freely introduced, the coloring chosen should accentuate the interlaced and re-interlaced triangles and the twelve passive passions, the thorn crown and the monogram I.H.S. The interlacing triangles, although they represent thorn branches, might be worked in gold, the thorn crown being in natural colors, with the passion flowers and leaves also colored to nature. If a dark ground is chosen, these should be the common *Passiflora cerulea*, but if on a white or light ground, the scarlet passion flower might be adopted instead. The flowers may be cut out of silk or cloth, and the details of the petals and corona worked over it. The sacred monogram should be in gold in any case. If required, the embroidery on the superfrontal might be traced from the same flowers and leaves, also for the strips that hang, orphrey-fashion, down the front of most modern altar cloths, in the style of old examples. There should be no difficulty in adapting a running border for this purpose from the wreath that surrounds the central design. On a dark violet or purple ground the blue passion flower may be too little different in tone to show well at a distance. In that case, one of the numerous white or variegated varieties may be introduced instead.

GLEESON WHITE.

#### PRACTICAL CARVING AND DESIGNING.

##### X.—ARTISTIC LETTERING.

THE amateur carver should know something of lettering. A picture-frame or a casket often needs a monogram, name or motto to complete it; but the best carving would be spoiled if the lettering betrayed ignorance of the correct forms and proportions of the particular style of letters adopted. The forms of the common, or Roman alphabet cannot, as a rule, be employed in artistic work, unless they are made unusual—picturesque or grotesque—by some alteration that suggests a look of age or quaintness. The letters that constantly meet the eye on signboards and posters may be said to be vulgarized by use and familiarity. They are forms that two thousand years of wear have shown to be the best for practical use on account of their remarkable distinctness; but they must give place to the more cursive and picturesque Anglo-Saxon forms for any artistic work. All rich and beautiful lettering in manuscripts, as well as for mural and monumental inscrip-

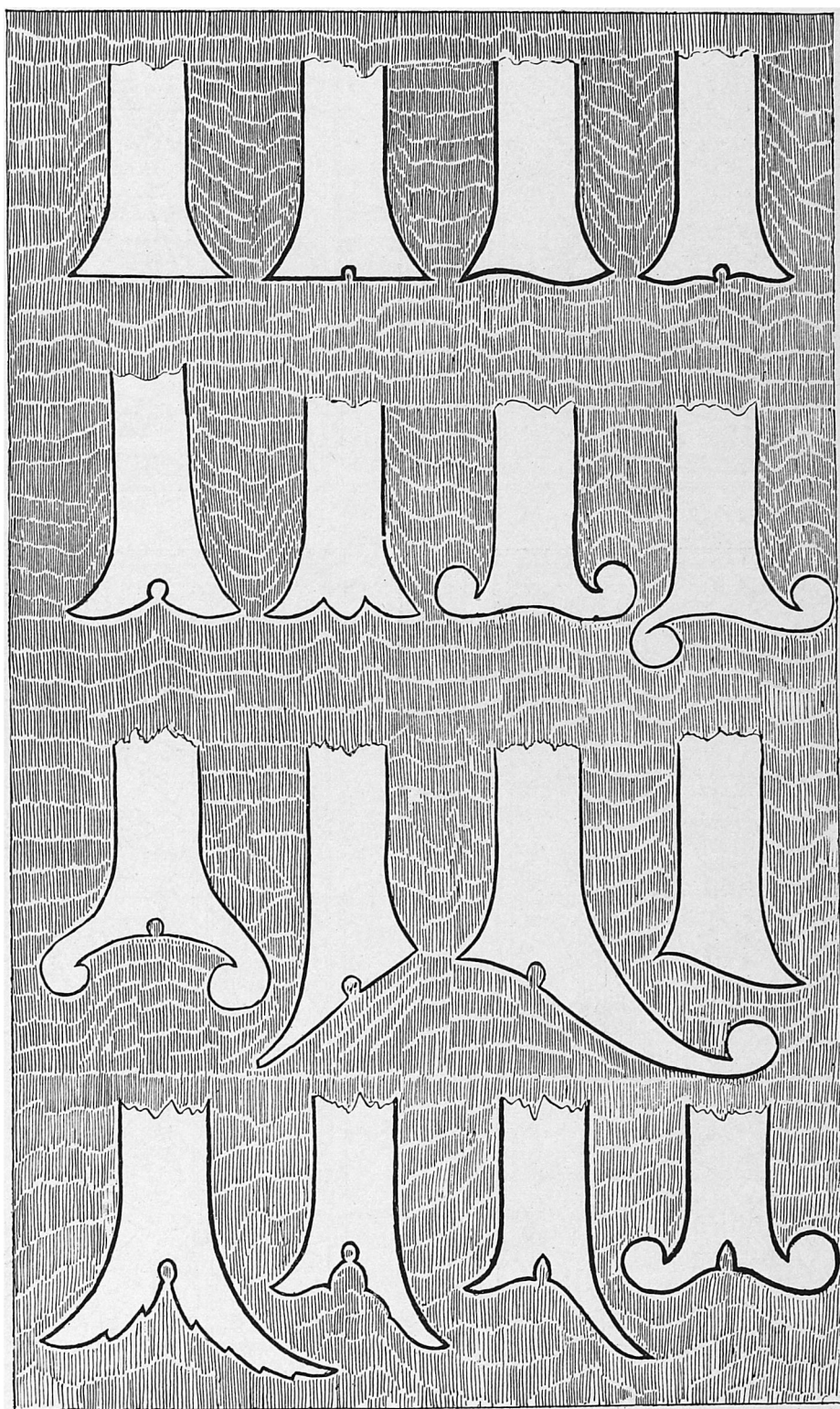
language was exclusively used in Catholic times in the Church ritual, whether spoken or sung, it is noteworthy that when the mediæval artist sought to make lettering beautiful, it was the Gothic form that caught his eye and fancy.

I lately read in an art journal that monograms were going out of fashion. If this refers to the customary distortion of letters so frequently seen in monograms, I think it is well that it should be so; but good lettering, whether for initials, monograms or inscriptions, when carefully drawn and cut, and appropriately used, will never cease to be good and interesting decoration.

The illustration on the opposite page shows a method of arranging and cutting an inscription which makes it highly decorative. The full size of the panel is fifteen by twenty-six inches. It occupies the upper part of the inside face of a door of a child's bedroom. It is lowered somewhat less than a quarter of an inch. Deep lowering of letters is to be avoided; it makes the forms resemble miniature walls and wells. Inscriptions, if appropriately chosen, are in excellent taste on the exposed beam of a room or hall, or on the fascia of a mantel, that is, on the face-board under the shelf. An example lately carved under my superintendence contained the old Scotch motto, "East or West, Home is Best;" the background in this case being wholly covered with holly leaves and berries, interspersed with mistletoe. A better effect, I think, is obtained when the background is not entirely covered by the design.

The accompanying illustration shows a variety of feet that might be appropriately used for the stems of Gothic letters. Of course it should be understood that, one type selected, all the letters must be in accord.

BENN PITMAN.



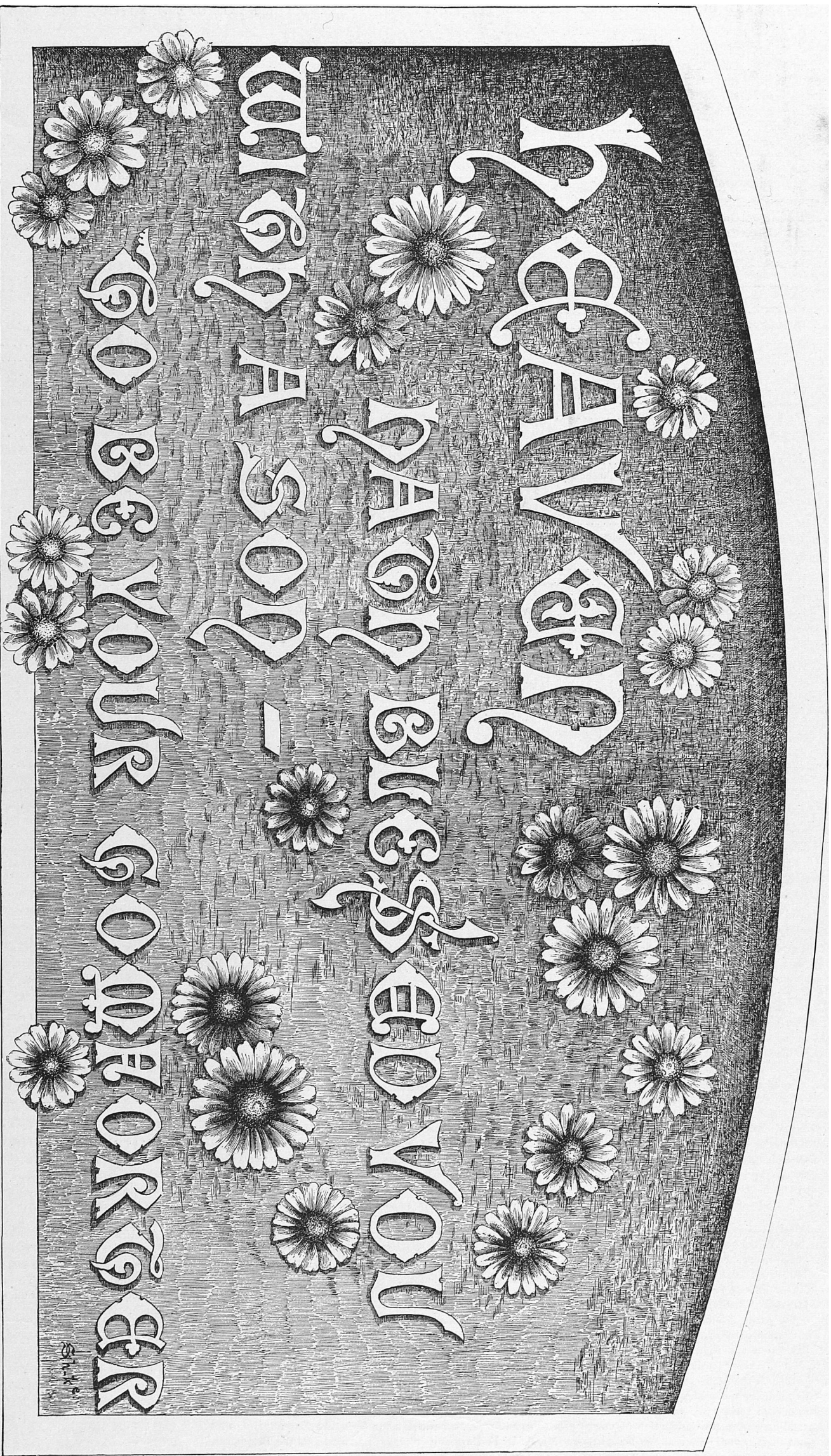
STEMS FOR GOTHIC LETTERS FOR WOOD-CARVING.

tions and mottoes on mantels, beams, architraves, etc., have, for the past thousand years, been almost entirely in Anglo-Saxon, or, as they are sometimes called, Gothic letters. It is curious to note that these forms held their way all through the Middle Ages for illuminated writing and decorative inscriptions, the Roman forms being as uniformly discarded. Considering that the Latin

ON the occasion of the recent Costume Reception, under the auspices of the New York Society of Decorative Art, much of the rich, warm, luxurious effect of the halls and galleries was due to the liberality with which Duveen and other dealers in old hangings and furniture allowed the committee on decoration to draw upon their resources. A deep red carpet covered the staircase, and the walls of the entrance hall were adorned with a wonderful set of Flemish tapestries, of Renaissance design, illustrating the siege of Troy. In the first of the series the wooden horse is being drawn into the city. The next shows the wily Ulysses and his followers emerging from the horse's flanks, and so the story is brought to its Homeric climax with the sacking of the famous city and the flight of Æneas and Anchises. The libraries, which did duty as supper-rooms, were also hung with tapestries, ingeniously connected with a frieze of silk brocade, and bands of plaited pink stuff of silken texture radiated from the central chandelier. A pair of twisted wooden columns, carved and gilded, which Chadwick got from an old Spanish church, were effectively placed at the entrance of the supper-room.

FIVE parts of aluminum to ninety-five of copper make aluminum bronze, a yellowish metal. Thirty parts tin to seventy copper make gray speculum-metal. When the light is reflected two or three times back and forth from the following metals, that from copper is red; gold, orange; silver, yellow; sodium, rosy pink; tin, grayish yellow; lead and zinc, blue gray, and steel, neutral gray. In general, concave surfaces show richer colors than plain.





CARVED PANEL OF A DOOR, SHOWING DECORATIVE TREATMENT OF AN INSCRIPTION. BY BENN PITMAN.

(SEE "PRACTICAL CARVING AND DESIGNING," ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE.)



